

**We have a really bad curve on our road. What can we do to get it fixed? Can't you at least get some signs put up?**

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We're all familiar with places where accidents have occurred. We all wish they had never happened. Even more, we hope they will never happen again.

The first priority of every County Engineer is Safety. That said, many things affect the "safety" of a road. Those include its condition – rough or smooth, narrow or wide, straight or curved. Other factors are the amount of traffic, night travel, wet weather or snow. The space between the road shoulder and power poles, mailboxes, trees, and other large objects affect the safety. Driveways, intersections and other roadside features are all part of the picture.

The best way to prevent traffic accidents is for drivers to recognize these conditions. It helps a lot when we drive at speeds that are in balance with the roadway. Nevertheless, while "driver error" is the main reason accidents occur, County Engineer's always look for ways to reduce the "surprises" and "conflicts" that increase chances for "driver error".

We put up signs try to reduce possible "surprises". Those include sensible speed limit, warning, and information signs. Next, we try to remove things that distract the driver, or may cause accidents that are more serious.

Now, a more direct answer to your second question. When we hear about a problem, we send out qualified staff to look. We may change signs to help prevent "surprises". That often helps normally careful drivers. We will also talk with our Sheriff about the speeding or other enforcement issues. In addition, we work with them to reinforce traffic safety rules.

The answer to your first question is not as simple. It usually means lots of time and money. I'm sure you would agree there are many places that could be "fixed" by building of a new piece of road. Unfortunately, you are not alone in asking for this type of work. We just are not able to "fix" everything on our growing list. However, I want to assure you that, by asking the question, we will evaluate the curve and look for any fixes that we can do quicker. Whether we move ahead with minor work in the near future, or decide on a priority for major work, we will always try to give you the safest road system we can.

I hope this is helpful and you are even more committed to helping us promote traffic safety.

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Jeff Monsen, P.E., Whatcom County Public Works Director

Questions about this article, or any of the series, or on other topics related to County Roads, may be directed either to your County Engineer, or to Al King, P.E., County Road Administration Board, Olympia, at [Al@CRAB.Wa.Gov](mailto:Al@CRAB.Wa.Gov).